

6 percent, or \$119.8 million, Facilities in the Corps' inventory are rising both in number and in age. This translates into a need to devote greater resources to protect the taxpayers' investment, and to make necessary engineering and technological improvements where necessary. Last year, the Corps' own estimates noted that the budget request for operations and maintenance would need to be increased by 50 percent to address delayed maintenance that is vitally needed, and will only cost more in the long term.

Without vital maintenance, Corps facilities run the risk of catastrophic failure, as may have been the case with the New Orleans levee system.

THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT AND
COASTAL LOUISIANA RESTORATION:

In July, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2864, the Water Resources Development Act of 2005. This legislation included an authorization for the first stage of the comprehensive restoration of the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA).

The LCA includes about 30 percent of the Nation's coastal marshes, but about 90 percent of the coastal land loss in the lower 48 States is occurring in this area. Over 1 million acres of the Louisiana coastal area have become open water since the 1930's. Another one-third of a million acres could be lost in the next 50 years unless corrective actions are taken.

The Louisiana coastal wetlands exist in the interface of the freshwater from coastal rivers including the Mississippi River and the saltwater of the Gulf of Mexico. This area once included more extensive marsh and barrier islands that served as a protective zone and buffered the effects of large storms that would otherwise severely damage inland areas. This natural protective barrier has been severely reduced. There are thousands of oil and gas wells along the coast with an associated network of pipelines and channels causing saltwater intrusion into a fresh water environment, destroying thousands of acres of coastal wetlands, and increasing the process of land subsidence and coastal erosion.

In addition, the flood control and navigation projects that keep the Mississippi River in a single channel have cut off the freshwater and sediment flows that historically created the coastal marsh where the river has overflowed its banks. Channelization of the Mississippi River has also increased the velocity of the water, depositing sediment off the Continental Shelf rather than distributing it along the deltaic plain. This funneling of nutrient-laden sediment through a single river channel has also exacerbated a hypoxic condition (dead zone) in an area of the Gulf of Mexico.

There is approximately \$100 billion of critical energy, transportation, and industrial infrastructure in the Louisiana coastal area that is at increasing risk from storm damage if coastal erosion continues unchecked. This includes major ports on the Mississippi between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Port Fourchon, a major port for offshore oil and gas exploration, 1,806 miles of navigation channel, 42,000 oil and gas wells and 4,200 miles of pipelines, 2,500 miles of highways, several of the Nation's largest oil refineries, and over 300,000 acres of agricultural lands.

In the 1990s, the Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the State of Louisiana, designed a comprehensive project for the long-

term reversal of the loss of coastal wetlands in the State. This project, estimated to cost approximately \$20 billion over the next 30 years, was designed to restore thousands of acres of coastal wetlands by diverting water and sediment from the Mississippi River into the coastal areas of Louisiana, attempting to mimic the deltaic forces which originally created this region. In addition, the project would attempt to build upon the successes of the Coastal Wetland Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, CWPRA, though a continuation of rebuilding strategic barrier islands and other coastal protections to provide further protection of the coastal region.

The Water Resources Development Act of 2005 authorizes the first installment of the LCA project, called the LCA Near-Term Plan. This plan, estimated to cost approximately \$2 billion over 10 years, would authorize the first five major projects of the longer term plan. In addition, this authorization would establish a process for the development of other future critical projects for the protection, conservation, and restoration of the coastal Louisiana ecosystem, as well as the selection of demonstration projects, and projects for the beneficial use of dredged material to test innovative technologies, models, and methods which may prove valuable in the future.

For the LCA Near-Term project, the cost share of constructing environmental restoration projects is 65 percent Federal, 35 percent nonfederal. The non-federal partner for this project is the State of Louisiana.

LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN RESTORATION PROGRAM

In 2000, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved legislation to create the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration program. This program, established within the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, and modeled under the National Estuaries Program, was designed to restore the ecological health of the Basin by developing and funding restoration projects and related scientific and public education projects.

The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration program focuses on water quality concerns within the Lake, and not hurricane and storm damage reduction projects, which are performed by the Corps. However, as the Corps begins to dewater the City of New Orleans, the issue of water quality may be a concern because of the pollutants, such as domestic sewage and toxic chemicals, contained in the flood waters that will need to be discharged back into the Lake.

EXPRESSING SHAME AT GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I know that today's session was a formality, that there would be no votes other than a voice vote; but I thought it was important to be here, to show my support for the victims of Hurricane Katrina in whatever way I could, however modest.

Martin Luther King said that we cannot walk alone. We are responsible for one another. We help others in need on the faith that when we are in need, we

will be helped. North Carolinians have twice faced desperate needs following devastating hurricanes in just the last decade. Other Americans have responded generously, both acting together through their government and in their contributions to private relief efforts. Americans are again responding generously to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

But, Mr. Speaker, I share the anger of many Americans at how shamefully inadequate our government's response has been. Tens of thousands of Americans are living outside the walls of civilization. They are without food, they are without water to drink, they are without medicine or medical care, they are without effective shelter. Mr. Speaker, they are without the protection against violence that law provides.

The failures that have led to that are not the failures of the last 4 days, but of the last 4 years. There have been repeated warnings that New Orleans and the Gulf Coast were vulnerable to precisely what has occurred, and yet our government was stunningly unprepared.

The President's press secretary was asked earlier this week about our Nation's response, our government's response to the hurricane, and he said now is not the time for finger-pointing. Earlier today on this floor the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) said now is not the time for finger-pointing. The gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP) has said now is not the time for finger-pointing. The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) said now is not the time for recrimination. The gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) said now is not the time for recrimination or for finger-pointing.

They say that this is a time to grieve for the victims of the hurricane; and, Mr. Speaker, I do grieve for the victims of the hurricane. They say now is the time to help the victims of the hurricane; and, Mr. Speaker, I want to help the victims of the hurricane in every way I can. I am here today, and like millions of Americans, my wife and I are contributing to private relief efforts.

But, Mr. Speaker, there has to come a time for accountability. If there is not accountability for the stunning failures that we have seen in our government's response to this hurricane, we will fail again and again.

I know that this administration thinks that accountability is an ephemeral thing. If there is an attempt at accountability too soon, it is finger-pointing. If there is an attempt at accountability too late, then it is something you should get over. There is just a moment for accountability.

Mr. Speaker, tell me when that moment will be? Tell me precisely when the moment will come for accountability for the failures of our response, for the failures of our planning that have led to the devastation and the hardships that we are seeing now.

Mr. Speaker, tell me where the line forms to ask hard questions.

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RIISING TO THE OCCASION AS AMERICANS TO HELP AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, yes, New Orleans is worth saving and rebuilding. It is one of the most American cities, for it represents how diversity comes together in harmony and blends into our music, our foods, our culture, and our Americanism.

Response to this disaster was a miserable failure. Americans died, Americans went hungry, Americans were living for days without water and without health services. You can live without food for 7 days, but you cannot live without water. Our health services were dysfunctional. We must admit, we failed at protecting our American citizens in our own homeland.

We as Congress must rise to the occasion. We have American citizens suffering and cannot get immediate help to them. Medics always take our wounded off the battlefields. Our social contract says trust us and we will deliver in your time of need. This is America's Gulf War.

One-half million people have been uprooted. Millions of people in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana, have been affected. 150,000 of the displaced live below the poverty line, and 50,000 of them are post-retirement age.

So what are we doing about it? What am I doing about it? I have called my State government, I have called my board of education, I have called my local representatives to ask them to do a displacement absorption plan; invite them to California, invite them to Los Angeles. Share your housing with a family. Share your schools, your colleges and your universities with those post-secondary students. Both public and private colleges must kick in.

We have started the New Orleans Hurricane Relief Fund. I am collecting money, along with several other organizations in the L.A. area and with one of our major radio stations, and we are having that money hand-carried into these disaster areas to the leadership that has been chosen to be responsible.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things that we can do and we must do, and we must do them now. I do not want to watch television another evening and see people begging for food and water, begging for medicine, begging to be taken out of areas that are soaked with water that will be causing diseases, with an environment that is polluted from the smoke coming up from the buildings that are on fire.

Where are we when the world is watching? I am embarrassed for the U.N. to say we are going to help you,

but I am overjoyed that other nations are addressing our needs when we are in need, as we have addressed theirs when they are in need.

So let us rise to the occasion. Let us save Americans. They are not refugees; they are citizens of the United States.

IN SUPPORT OF EMERGENCY APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this emergency appropriation.

This is a moment of crisis for America. This is a test of our character as a great nation.

As we gather here in relative comfort, Americans are dying in Louisiana. At this moment, Americans are facing danger and desperation in Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi.

We all have seen the horrific pictures. We have heard the desperate screams for help. We all have heard the accounts of the almost unimaginable devastation that has gripped America's Gulf Coast.

Now is the time for Americans to immediately respond. Now is the time for us, as a people, to take action with a force equal to that of Hurricane Katrina.

We face an enormous challenge; yet, this is not the time to become overwhelmed. It is, however, a time that cries out for a heightened sense of urgency.

Now is the time for immediate and effective action, as a nation and individually.

The Federal Government is responding—and we are moving to pick up the pace.

Today, the Congress will approve a \$10 billion emergency aid package to help fund relief efforts.

The members of the Congressional Black Caucus have pledged to do all that we can to help. Several of our members will be visiting the Gulf Coast in the next few weeks to provide support. However, we cannot stop here.

The Bush administration and the Congress must demonstrate that we share the sense of urgency felt by those on the front lines of this battle for survival on the Gulf Coast. We must dedicate the full resources of the Federal Government to stabilize, repair, and rebuild this important region of our country.

There is no time to waste, for people are dying. The destruction caused by the aftermath of this storm gets worse every hour.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans felt lucky just to be alive after surviving the storm. Now, they are in a continuing struggle for their survival. Men, women and children (our countrymen) have now gone days without food—and far too long without the clean water and medical attention that they need. They are surrounded by flood waters littered with dead bodies.

It is the frail, sick, weak, and elderly that are dying, all while the Nation is about to celebrate a long holiday weekend.

Many of those now in such dire circumstances were already living in poverty and destitution even before Hurricane Katrina. They had no ability to evacuate. And, now, their very survival depends upon the response of their country.

Many of these Americans who now are struggling to survive are Americans of color.

Their cries for assistance confront America with a test of our moral compass as a Nation. We cannot allow it to be said by history that the difference between those who lived and those who died in the great storm and flood of 2005 was nothing more than poverty, age or skin color. It would be unconscionable to stand by and do nothing.

I had a constructive conversation yesterday with Mr. Claude Allen, the President's top assistant for domestic policy. I am confident that the Federal Government is expanding and intensifying its response as I speak.

Yet, government cannot succeed in this challenge without help. We must challenge leaders in the private sector to formulate strategies as to how they can best contribute.

We have long heard claims of "compassionate conservatism" among our Nation's leaders. This is the time for those with wealth and resources to step up to the plate and demonstrate that compassion.

This is the time to save human lives. People are dying because they have no water. Companies that bottle water now have the power to save lives. Infants are dying because there is no baby formula to keep them alive. Companies that make this formula must be on the front lines. Food companies could work with the National Guard to coordinate the distribution of food to the victims. Private contractors that have helicopters and boats and buses at their disposal could put those tools to work in the service of their country.

It has been reported that oil producers and home improvement stores may actually benefit in the long run from Hurricane Katrina. These are industries that should be the first to offer support.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am not saying that nothing is being done at this time, although we all expected the Federal response would have been more immediate.

Nevertheless, generosity of spirit is being demonstrated by countless individuals in this country who have given an outpouring of support.

Now, however, is the time for those who can make a major impact with just one phone call to do so. And if these private companies already have something planned, it is important that they coordinate their efforts to provide their help most effectively.

This crisis demands a heightened—and sustained—sense of urgency.

The public has asked what they can do. They can begin by donating to the various charities that have pledged to help in the relief effort. They can also follow our lead today by demanding that the mayors and governors across this great Nation provide essential services to those now seeking shelter and aid.

In Matthew 25, verses 34 through 40, the Lord gives a simple explanation of what is demanded of true Christians:

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed